L: Hambourdin 8-4, 8 (1894) 1897 893 Vidal 893 Mirebalais

[illegible] a dowry forfeit their share, but even when a formal deal has not passed, the number of animals given her when she went to her husband is mentioned and she is sometimes asked to waive a corresponding portion of her share in consideration of what she has already received. If she refuses to do this, however, there is no recourse but to allow her her full share, though public opinion would censure such greed.

Debts incurred by the dead must be repaid before the estate can be settled, while attempts are also made to collect all loans made by him. Where no written statement of a debt exists, a declaration by the dying man before witnesses is necessary; otherwise his heirs acknowledge their obligation at their pleasure. Conversely, if no statement attested by a notary exists to verify a loan made by him, his heirs have no means of collecting it. On the whole, lending has been found through experience to be ill-advised unless such a "paper" has been executed before a notary, and land has been pledged as collateral either before the head of the family of the borrower or before a magistrate. For though interest is not demanded by the peasants, and loans are made as a gesture of friendship, "even the people of the hills"—to use the Mirebalais idiom for the most naïve rustics—have learned that just debts are often not repaid where there is no legally enforceable claim.

A man who dies childless leaves his property to his brothers and sisters by the same father and mother. The husband of a "legally" married woman who dies childless is said to have the right to one fourth of her property, the rest going to her relatives, but most often "they drive him away," giving him nothing, and since a man is customarily too proud to contest the matter, he does not insist on receiving his due. A childless widow continues to live in her dead husband's house until her death, and she also receives one fourth of her husband's property. At her death the house passes to her husband's relatives, but the quarter of his estate which she had received goes to her family.

764 hooked the bier, the pallbearers brought the body forward as though to go straight ahead, but then they began to lurch and sway as though an invisible force were pushing them around. They veered as though to take the right turn; and again they lurched and staggered. At last they turned toward the left, and in this direction they found the road clear. The houngan thanked the Master of the Crossroads, the widow took her place at the head of the procession, and it proceeded on its way to the cemetery.

793 In the services for a dead houngan described by Simpson, the body is
792 placed in a coffin, which is carried to all the places sacred to the loa of the
762 houngan before being taken to the cemetery. First it is taken to the sacred trees where the loa reside, then to the sacred spring "whose waters have cured many sicknesses which physicians had pronounced incurable . . . (823) The bearers of the coffin circle the spring several times. The coffin is swung [toward] each of the four cardinal points." Afterward the procession continues its way to the burial ground.[1]

766 But the treatment given to the dead may vary according to the manner
764 in which they died. Leyburn notes, for example, that "a person struck by
761 lightning . . . would have no ceremonies at all, for lightning is an act of God."[2] It may well be that the Haitian rationale for not holding ceremonies for an individual killed by lightning is that God has already held the final ceremony. But in the Haitian mind all deaths are, in the last analysis, acts of God, even though magic, poison, or accident may have played an immediate part. Why, then, should the corpse struck by lightning be treated so differently? The answer would appear to lie in a custom of the Yoruba of dispensing with all burial rites for persons killed by (794) lightning, such persons being considered enemies of the lightning deity Shango. In Dahomey, Herskovits reports, the same attitude prevails in regard to persons killed by lightning:

> If a person is killed by lightning he . . . stands convicted by this fact of some grave crime which has incurred the displeasure of the god of the Thunder Pantheon (Xevioso). A person so killed is never buried by his family, but the body is turned over to the chief priest and sub-members of these deities. It is believed that a man killed in this fashion remains upright until the chief priest questions him and forces him to confess the crimes he had committed to be so punished. No one touches any of the belongings of such a man, not even his money. The house in which he lived is allowed to go to ruin, no cases of palm fronds being placed around it to guard against anyone entering it. The moveable property of such a man, his clothes, his mats, and his dishes, are thrown away at the crossroads . . .[3]

766 The burial of a Haitian who dies of smallpox likewise differs from that of one who dies a "normal" death. The victim of smallpox is buried without a coffin in a segregated part of the cemetery. The reason for this lies

[1] [Simpson, Op. Cit., P. 161. Cf. P. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]
[2] [Leyburn, The Haitian People, P. 156. Cf. P. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]
[3] [Herskovits, Dahomey, I, 398. Cf. P. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]